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Debts Due and Overdue: Beginnings of Philosophy in Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Anaximander

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What sort of text is *On the Genealogy of Morals,* this work that Nietzsche called the "uncanniest" of all books? Is it only a book about morals, as the title might indicate? Even the superficial reader will see that much more is at stake, since questions concerning politics and aesthetics are prominent. But could we also read more attentively and with an ear to hearing a certain diagnosis of the metaphysical condition and its tradition that are necessarily implicated in the genealogy of morals? Certainly Nietzsche begins to suggest ideas of this sort quite early in the text, as in his account of the way in which the morality of *ressentiment* is responsible for the invention of the metaphysical fiction of free will by which the doer is separated from the deed.

In this essay I want to suggest that there is a confrontation with the metaphysical tradition on an even larger scale that emerges in Nietzsche's account of the economy of guilt, debt, and credit that forms the subject especially (but not only) of the book's second essay " 'Guilt,' 'Bad Conscience,' and the Like." In order to see this it will be necessary to place Nietzsche's *Genealogy* in the context of two other texts—*Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—that speak of penance, guilt, and redemption as themes characteristic of philosophy as we know it.

This contextualization can be made plausible, I think, by taking a look at Martin Heidegger's essay on Anaximander, who seems to have spoken of debt at the very beginning of the philosophical tradition, and so to have placed us all in his debt despite ourselves. Heidegger's essay, I want to suggest, is to a great extent a determined polemic with Nietzsche on the meaning of a sentence—and so on the sense of the tradition that harkens back to that sentence. Considering these two methods of Western philo-

sophical bookkeeping involves writing at least some initial promissory notes toward a final accounting of the ways in which Nietzsche and Heidegger succeed in marking a difference with and posing an alternative to the metaphysical economies of the tradition they articulate.

One of Heidegger's strangest and uncanniest readings of Western philosophy is his encounter with the saying reputed to be that of Anaximander, supposed to be its earliest surviving sentence. To read that saying, Heidegger thinks, requires nothing less than the destruction of the metaphysical tradition. The point of the destruction is to uncover what is unsaid and unthought in metaphysics in order to think of the beginning and the end that lie at the margins of the tradition, and to think in a way more attuned to origins than the tradition allows.

That the very beginning—that which might serve as an *arche,* an origin, or a principle—is available only in the form of a fragment, in fact a scrap from Simplicius's physics textbook dating from a thousand years after Anaximander's lifetime, is itself odd enough. Of course Heidegger cautions us that mere antiquity is not a proof of significance or profundity.[1] Yet as Simplicius notes, Anaximander was the first to speak of the *arche*; so what makes his saying a potential *arche* for philosophy is not only his place at the beginning but his having brought the beginning, or *arche,* into the world of thinking that we now take to define ourselves. Let us recall the saying in the same form in which Heidegger cites it initially, that is in the translation by the young Nietzsche.

Soon we'll see that the citation of this "conventional" translation is a crucial hinge in Heidegger's strategy, and that the confrontation with Nietzsche is a major theme of his essay "*Der Spruch des Anaximanders.*" What seems to be Heidegger's confession of a debt to Nietzsche, his owning up to an I.O.U., is in fact an attempt to free himself from any such obligation. To serve as a beginning is at the same time to open oneself to translation: the beginning must always be carried forward or carried over into another context. So in the "young Nietzsche's" translation from the posthumously published *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (Heidegger emphasizes Nietzsche's youth: does that help to free from debt or does it reinforce it? Anaximander is in one sense the most youthful, and *we* are the oldest):

> Whence things have their origin, there they must also pass away according to necessity; for they must pay penalty and be judged for their injustice, according to the ordinance of time.

This of course is an English version of Nietzsche's

> *Woher die Dinge ihre Entstehung haben, dahin müssen sie auch zu Grunde gehen, nach der Notwendigkeit; denn sie müssen Büsse zahlen und für ihre Ungerechtigkeiten gerichtet werden, gemäss der Ordnung der Zeit.*[2]

And that is based on the young philologist's reading of the Greek:

> ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσίς ἐστι τοίς οὖσι καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταύτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν.

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche's translation is not sufficiently thoughtful; the youthful scholar, he implies, has all too easily assumed his own debts to the philological and philosophical traditions. He makes this point in a number of ways throughout the Anaximander essay. He does so at the outset by juxtaposing Nietzsche's translation to one by Hermann Diels that appeared in the same year (1903) as the posthumous publication of Nietzsche's book. The two versions, Heidegger says, "arise from different intentions and procedures. Nevertheless they are scarcely distinguishable."[3] The implicit claim is that, metaphysically speaking, the aberrant young philologist (who was at the time of his translation being excluded from the charmed circle of his profession because of *The Birth of Tragedy*) and the more conventional scholarly translator are operating on the basis of a common set of assumptions and beliefs.

These assumptions and beliefs in fact add up to the culmination of Western metaphysics. For Heidegger this conclusion or "*Vollendung*" accomplishes itself in a twofold manner. It is expressed in the later Nietzsche's doctrines of the will to power and eternal recurrence, which assert the absolute presence of beings. Modern science—and this would include the philological science of a Diels or a Nietzsche—is also part of this development, for it claims to make all beings present and accessible, retrieving even the oldest and darkest sayings of the beginning for a comprehensive and intelligible history of the tradition.

The very enterprise of translation, then, is metaphysical insofar as it supposes universal standards of intelligibility and rules of transformation and correspondence that guarantee equivalence of meaning from one language to another. While Nietzsche sometimes voiced doubts about the possibility of translating the philosophy of one language family into that of another, he does not seem to see any essential obstacle to the translation of Greek into German—a translation that would allow us to assume our debt to the Greeks. In the era of the global will to power and its information network, Heidegger says, a translation may be perfectly "correct" by prevailing standards, and yet everything in it may be "embroiled in equivocal and imprecise significations."[4]

Let us notice that we have begun to describe the activity of translation in economic terms that are hardly alien to the (usual) translation of the Anaximander "fragment" itself; remember that the "fragment" seems to say that there is a fundamental law of equivalence among things that renders justice possible. (My quotation marks indicate a caution, to be devel-

oped in what follows, as to whether we do justice to the phrase in question by calling it a fragment.) But it will also be precisely and importantly just these aspects of the usual translation that Heidegger will be concerned to eliminate. For Heidegger it is apparent that Diels and Nietzsche, as well as Hegel before them, were working under the spell of Plato and Aristotle. Under that spell (or shouldering that enormous debt) the Anaximander "fragment," like the rest of what is called "pre-Socratic" thinking, can appear only as an attempt to think of nature (in the later sense of that word, not as the coming into being that is *physis*), and as a confused attempt at that. The alleged confusion would be the transference of moral and political notions, such as punishment and justice, to the natural or physical world.

Already in the sixth century Simplicius had said that Anaximander spoke in a poetic manner that was difficult to understand; and before that Aristotle had read the earlier thinkers as natural philosophers who dimly anticipated his conceptions of substance and cause. We could hear in these responses to the saying of Anaximander the double register of all desire: as the oldest it is that to which we are most indebted; as poetry or confused speculation about nature we scarcely owe it anything.

On Heidegger's view it is profoundly anachronistic to read the saying in terms of the distinctions made between logic, ethics, and physics in later philosophy. To establish a thinking conversation with Anaximander that is not restricted by these divisions, Heidegger must bracket the entire story of philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche—a story whose common thread is the need to make beings present in their being. Payments on the debt to this tradition must be suspended and perhaps rescheduled. Heidegger's translation will operate on the principle of incommensurability rather than on the supposition of universal equivalence that he finds so misleading in Diels and Nietzsche.

The outline of Heidegger's metahistory of philosophy as the metaphysics of presence are well known, so I will recall it here only in the most telegraphic fashion. Beginning with the form or *eidos* that is supposed to be eminently present in contrast to the changing things of sense, Plato sets the stage for further refinements in the conception of what is truly present. Christian theology finds such intrinsic presence in God, despite the fact that we see only through a glass darkly in this life. The modern, Cartesian turn takes the present to be subjective, that which is revealed to the thinking subject reflecting on itself. Leibniz, through his thesis concerning the identity of perception and appetition, begins the development that culminates in the German idealists who take the present to be will—either in the rational form of the Kantian moral will or in that of the blind, raging will of Schopenhauer or the Nietzschean will to power.

To read Anaximander against this tradition, rather than through it, re-

quires that we question almost all the usual assumptions concerning the saying. In particular it means being vigilant with regard to the notion that Anaximander confuses physics and ethics, by viewing natural things under the categories of justice and economics. By the time Heidegger is done with his reading, all the language of debt, exchange, reparation, penalty, and of justice and injustice found in the usual translations has disappeared. In fact over half the text of what, following Simplicius, has been taken to be the "fragment" itself has been deleted, so that at the end we are left with just this:

> along the lines of usage; for they let order and thereby also reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of disorder.

But the English is hardly adequate to Heidegger's German which is pervaded by a deliberate *Entfremdungseffekt*:

> *entlang dem Brauch; gehören nämlich lassen sie Fug somit auch Ruch eines dem anderen (im Verwinden) des Un-Fugs.*

Heidegger has fragmented the supposed fragment even further in order to make it speak. In his removal of all references to debt, penalty, and the like, we may be tempted to see an injury that he has inflicted on the beginning itself, a kind of primal wounding or marking of the *arche* itself; or perhaps it is an attempt to restore the *arche* so far as that is possible, by following traces of language and meaning that have been shoved back into the indefinite by the workings of the later tradition.

This may be the point at which to note that Heidegger does not call the text in question a fragment (as we tend to do in English, and as the otherwise excellent English translation of his essay does). Rather, he refers to it in the essay's title as a *Spruch,* that is as a saying, a maxim, a dictate, or an aphorism. While Heidegger does not speak explicitly of restoring or redeeming the saying, he does speak of rescue (*Rettung*) at the very conclusion of the essay, immediately after he has provided the translation we have just read. We must talk of rescue, he says, because we cannot know what it would be like to enter into a conversation with the earliest thought unless we think of the current devastation of the earth, a devastation that takes the form of a universal technologism expressing "a singular will to conquer." "Is there any rescue? Rescue comes when and only when danger is."[5]

The question of rescue remains a question; but at least it has been stated, and the suggestion has been made that there is some relationship between the rescue of early Greek thinking and the rescue of our technological civilization from what we might call the universal translation machine. It is worth noting that the issue of rescue also attaches in the doxographic tradition to Anaximander's own thought. As Charles Kahn suggests in his book

on Anaximander, we can ask: "Did Anaximander envisage an even greater cycle, in which the appearance of this differentiated universe out of the Boundless would itself be periodically balanced by the return of all things, including the elements, back into their original source?"[6]

As Kahn notes, this talk of rescue from the injustices and reparations of the many things is not supported by our most reliable sources. Rescue, as with Heidegger, is conjectural. Nietzsche seems not to have had any doubts about this part of the doxographical tradition, for he explicitly links Heraclitus to Anaximander, saying that the former "believes, like Anaximander, in a periodically repeated end of the world, and in an ever-renewed rise of another world out of the all-destroying cosmic fire."[7]

The thematics of rescue and redemption are also associated with Anaximander and what he stands for in Nietzsche's thought, as we shall see. Eventually I will articulate three significant places where Nietzsche confronts Anaximander directly or by allusion. In each of these passages Nietzsche emphasizes and articulates the themes of debt, penalty, and punishment that Heidegger wants to eliminate. The most comprehensive treatment of the economy of thought, practice, and culture in these terms is, of course, that in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. But the *Spruch* or saying itself is not in need of rescue, for the first thing that Nietzsche says about Anaximander in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* is that his sentences are quite in order as they are. He is described as "the first philosophical author of the ancients," who

> writes exactly as one expects a typical philosopher to write when alienating demands have not yet robbed him of his innocence and naiveté. That is to say, in graven stylized letters, sentence after sentence the witness to fresh illumination, each the expression of time spent in sublime meditation.[8]

This is a remarkable claim to make on the basis of one surviving sentence (if indeed we have that much). From this perspective the text that we are dealing with is not a fragment in need of rescue, but a sentence hanging over our heads. To the image of Anaximander as first to speak of the *arche* we can now add that he is the first to put philosophy into writing, and to inscribe it with a force such that later thinkers will necessarily be indebted to it.

This lapidary inscription forever marks the body of philosophy. Like the marks of punishment that Nietzsche describes in the *Genealogy*, they provide a forced and perhaps a painful memory that seems inescapable. After quoting the sentence—a sentence that Nietzsche says speaks with "lapidary impressiveness"—he wonders how we are to read it: "Enigmatic proclamation of a true pessimist, oracular inscription [*Orakelaufschrift*] over the boundary stone of Greek philosophy: how shall we interpret you?"[9]

At this point Nietzsche makes a significant gesture—a gesture that Hei-

degger does not mention in his own brief reference to Nietzsche's translation and interpretation. For in order to interpret Anaximander, Nietzsche recalls Schopenhauer, who as "the only serious moralist of our century charges us with a similar reflection":

> The proper measure with which to judge any and all human beings is that they are really creatures who should not exist at all and who are doing penance [*Büsse zahlen,* the same words that appear in Nietzsche's translation] for their lives by their manifold sufferings and their death. What could we expect of such creatures? Are we not all sinners under sentence of death? We do penance for having been born, first by living and then by dying.[10]

Several things are notable here when we compare Nietzsche's presentation with Heidegger's reading. Although Heidegger claims that from Aristotle and Theophrastus down to Hegel and Nietzsche the saying has been interpreted as a principle of natural philosophy (in the narrow sense), it is clear that Nietzsche (by way of Schopenhauer) takes the saying to apply to human beings as well as to natural things. It may be "extracted from man's life" and projected onto all existence, but it does not cease to pertain to men and women. More significantly, in associating Anaximander and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche seems to be doing something remarkably similar to what Heidegger does in stressing the continuity of the metaphysical and hermeneutical traditions from Plato to Nietzsche. It is as if Nietzsche is saying that from Anaximander to Schopenhauer philosophy has been saying and thinking the Same. He would be sketching a metahistory of philosophy that could be taken to be both a model for and a rival of the one that Heidegger deploys. Just as Heidegger sees Nietzsche providing one more version—albeit an *in*version—of Platonic metaphysics, so Nietzsche comments that Kant's thing in itself is simply a transformation of the *apeiron* (the indefinite or boundless), and that Anaximander was dealing with the "profoundest problem in ethics . . . : How can anything pass away which has a right to be?"[11]

Of course one might wonder whether these are indeed the themes that define the philosophical tradition. But notice how both Nietzsche and Heidegger, in dealing with the thinker of the *arche,* maintain that the tradition as a whole must be brought into play, and that in order to enter into conversation with the earliest it is necessary to know the late position from which we speak. If Heidegger owes Nietzsche a debt here, it is one that he has carefully obscured by associating him, via Diels, with the will to power of the scientific and technological world—the scholarly form of *Gestell,* in which the oldest sayings of the Greeks become mere material or resources (*Bestand*) for the translation industry. Yet there are obviously important differences between the two metahistories of philosophy, differences that

become clearer in the second of Nietzsche's confrontations with the thought of Anaximander.

This second *Auseinandersetzung* occurs in a major chapter of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* entitled "*Von der Erlösung*" or "Of Redemption" (Z II:20).[12] Let us note immediately that *Erlösung* is a multifaceted word that can designate either religious or spiritual redemption on the one hand or the redeeming of a debt on the other. And in this chapter redemption is considered on several levels. The issue is introduced by a spokesman for a number of cripples who says that Zarathustra cannot persuade the people unless he also persuades those who are blind or deformed. If he could correct or redeem their bodily excesses and defects he would be a more plausible teacher. But, Zarathustra asks, would this in fact be a great redemption? Even the people say that to take away the hump from the hunchback is to destroy his spirit.

This thought leads to a consideration of bodily and spiritual fragmentation that now appears to be almost universal, extending far beyond the obvious cases of deformity. Some people are nothing but particular bodily organs in a monstrously enlarged state with a corresponding atrophy of others; such an inverse cripple might, for example, be an "ear as big as a man" with "a tiny envious face." So most people are nothing but fragments and severed limbs (*Bruchstücken und Gliedmassen*). Those who appear to be whole are actually fragments; while ancient sayings, like those of Anaximander that appear to be fragmentary, are in fact lapidary utterances whose inscriptions remain hanging over us for millennia.

In fact the inscriptions themselves may help to account for the human fragmentation. For the essential question of redemption has to do not with the blind and the lame but with the woundings, scarrings, and divisions effected by time—and especially by the time of the inscription of revenge, a time that Nietzsche here calls madness (*Wahnsinn*). Because the will cannot will backward, because it is bound to the law of time and time's "it was," life is a perpetual process of fragmentation in which the past seems to be nothing but a collection of dispersed and shattered ruins. In this situation the will can be nothing but an "angry spectator" who sees "man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcherfield" (*zertrümmert und zerstreuet wie über ein Schlacht- und Schlächterfeld*) (Z II:20).

But these fragments can also be seen as "fragments of the future"—if redemption is possible. Already Nietzsche is appearing to speak in the language of Anaximander: the fragments (men or men-parts in this case) suffer by being cut off from the whole, perhaps simply for coming into separate existence "according to the ordinance of time." The doxographers, even if unreliable, spoke of the possibility of a redemption through the collapse of the individuated things and elements back into the whole. Zarathustra now defines what he sees as the only possible form of redemption:

> To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all "it was" into a "thus I willed it"—that alone should I call redemption. (Z II:20)

Redemption would be redemption from the spirit of revenge. Zarathustra at this point distinguishes "revenge" and "the spirit of revenge" in a way that will help in explaining the significance of Anaximander's saying:

> Verily, a great folly [*Narrheit*] dwells in our will; and all men are under a curse insofar as this folly has acquired spirit. (Z II:20)

The folly of revenge is one thing, but it becomes malevolent and dangerous when it acquires spirit. How did revenge acquire spirit? Zarathustra's answer is that thought and reflection have been preoccupied with suffering and punishment, and that "madness" (*Wahnsinn*, a step beyond *Narrheit*) has produced a law, a formula, and an inscription that has marked the will. Now this fateful inscription, I want to suggest, is the lapidary utterance of Anaximander as it has been carved and engraved in the stones and monuments of philosophy: when madness comes to preach and inscribe, then revenge passes from its simple state to one in which it has acquired spirit. We need to read Zarathustra's comments on the spirit of revenge (at some length) so that we hear in them the resonance of the thinker and speaker of the *arche*. For the *arche* here is the principle of philosophy, the tradition from Anaximander to Schopenhauer:

> The *spirit of revenge*, my friends, has so far been the subject of man's best reflection; and where there was suffering, one always wanted punishment too.
>
> For "punishment" is what revenge calls itself; with a hypocritical lie it creates a good conscience for itself.
>
> Because there is suffering in those who will, inasmuch as they cannot will backwards, willing itself and all life were supposed to be—a punishment. And now cloud upon cloud rolled over the spirit, until eventually madness preached, "Everything passes away; therefore everything deserves to pass away. And this too is justice, this law of time that it must devour its children." Thus preached madness.
>
> "Things are ordered morally according to justice and punishment. Alas, where is redemption from the flux of things and from the punishment called existence?" Thus preached madness. (Z II:20)

The passage continues, but let us stop here. The Anaximander saying or fragment, at least in the translation of the "young Nietzsche," is clearly recognizable in the preaching of madness. Here the Schopenhauerian heritage of the saying has been made explicit so that philosophy itself is the voice of madness, preaching in sentences that compel over the centuries. Madness is the very name of philosophy here, and its history and development are interpreted as indebted to the initiator of the *arche*, to the first inscription of universal indebtedness. No redemption is possible within this world of madness, unless it is that, in the last subjective form of the mad-

ness, the philosophy of the will, that the will should cease to will. If existence is a debt, the debt can be paid off and marked "paid in full" only by the self-destruction of the debtor.

Is some other form of redemption possible? This would have to be a redemption from the preachings of madness; one might say that it would have to be a redemption from redemption as madness understands it. The name of this redemption is the eternal recurrence of all things. Taken in a simple and preliminary way, that teaching would speak of "the innocence of becoming"; it would declare that nothing is owed and no debt is to be paid.

But should we read Anaximander in Nietzsche's translation? Although Heidegger says that the words *dike, tisis,* and *adikia* "resound" in the saying, he also maintains that we translate them as justice, retributive payment, and injustice only because of our own "juridical-moral notions."[13] If we listen to "what comes to language" in the fragment, Heidegger tell us, we will hear something else (I quote selectively from some of the work of Heidegger's translation):

> We hear that wherever *adikia* rules all is not right with things. That means something is out of joint. . . . To presencing as such jointure must belong, thus creating the possibility of its being out of joint. . . . Coming to presence in the jointure of the while, what is present abandons that jointure and is, in terms of whatever lingers awhile, in disjunction. Everything that lingers awhile stands in disjunction. To the presencing of what is present, to the *eon* of *eonta, adikia* belongs. . . . [So contrary to Nietzsche and Diels] the fragment says nothing about payment, recompense, and penalty; nor does it say that something is punishable, or even must be avenged, according to the opinion of those who equate justice with vengeance.[14]

Heidegger reads the other words of the fragment in a similar fashion, following what he calls "the way of translation."[15] *Tisis* is not "penalty" for him but "esteem" (*Schätzen*). "To esteem something means to heed it, and so to take satisfactory care of what is estimable in it."[16] Such esteeming is related to the sense that Heidegger finds in *didonai diken*: "gives jointure." Here we are very close to the Heideggerian thematics of the "*es gibt*" to which we must return. But what should be evident now is that Heidegger's translation is a way of substituting an economy of giving for that of penalty and debt. So we need to consider carefully what Heidegger says about giving here in order to ask whether his economy of the gift is in fact a critical alternative to the economy that the tradition (which he represents by Nietzsche and Diels) has found in the Anaximander fragment. He asks:

> What does "give" mean here? . . . How should what is present as such give the jointure of its presencing? The giving designated here can only consist in its manner of presencing. Giving is not only giving-away (*Weggeben*). More

originally, giving is acceding or giving-to (*Zugeben*). Such giving lets something belong to another which properly belongs to him.[17]

We will return to the "*es gibt,*" but for now let us note that the giving that Heidegger finds in Anaximander, a giving that would in some sense be outside the metaphysical tradition, is a giving oriented toward providing the recipient with his or her own. Is this so far from saying that it provides the recipient with what he or she is owed? And so how far is it from that discourse that Heidegger finds to be an illegitimate projection of concerns with restitution and setting things right? Notice that Heidegger specifically relegates giving in the sense of giving-away (*Weggeben*) to a secondary or peripheral status. The *es gibt* does not refer to an economy of excess or expenditure.

It should be noted, by the way, that historical etymology provides little support for Heidegger's readings. (Of course Heidegger is able to acknowledge this, and to contest scientific philology on the grounds that it simply acts out the imperatives of the metaphysical tradition.) For even in Homer *tisis,* for example, frequently seems to have the sense of "vengeance" or "retribution," as in the *Illiad* where Achilles tells Apollo that, being divine, the latter cannot possibly fear any *tisis* or retribution from a mortal.[18] In the *Odyssey* Telemachus warns the suitors who are indulging themselves with the goods of his father's estate that if they were to eat up the flocks altogether, *tisis* would have to be made one day.[19]

In fact the conventional lexicon would find more indications of the complex of debt, credit, punishment, and justice in the language of Anaximander's saying than occurs even in the Nietzsche and Diels versions. Consider *chreon,* which Nietzsche translates as "necessity" (*Notwendigkeit*), and which Heidegger reads provocatively as "usage" (*Brauch*). Either is lexically possible, and Heidegger's complaint that "necessity" seems indebted to Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions is not implausible. But as Kahn points out, Anaximander's *chreon* could also be taken to be related to *chreos,* or debt, which comes from the same root.[20]

Are these the teachings of a madness all too solidly inscribed on the boundary stone of philosophy, as Nietzsche would have it, or have they been distorted by a later deviation, by that history which Heidegger equates with error? Kahn's more recent reading is congruent with the tradition of interpretation that Heidegger rejects. In the *Genealogy* Nietzsche returns to the double theme of indebtedness and redemption. It is perhaps with reference to the "teaching of madness" that Nietzsche writes there of the "*redeeming* man of great love and contempt," a redeemer who will lift the "curse of the hitherto reigning ideal" (GM II:24).[21] Here at the end of the second part of the *Genealogy* Nietzsche speaks repeatedly of redemption and of a redeemer—just after he has attempted to demonstrate that the

Christian notion of redemption, tied as it is to the economic complex of debt and credit, makes the earth into a madhouse.

Now among the principle themes of the *Genealogy* are guilt, debt, punishment, justice, and redemption. Nietzsche's treatment of these themes is usually read (by Michel Foucault, for example) as an account of those sociopolitical formations that eventually produce the aberrations of Christianity and other forms of asceticism.[22] Yet the analysis goes further, for Nietzsche claims that such notions are so rooted in human beings that they constitute "thinking *as such*" (*das Denken*): "Setting prices, determining values, contriving equivalences, exchanging—these preoccupied the earliest thinking of man to so great an extent that in a certain sense they constitute thinking *as such*" (GM II:8; Nietzsche's emphasis).

The *Genealogy* is, among other things, a text about interpretation. We are told in the preface, for example, that the entire Third Essay is an *Auslegung* of a single aphorism from *Zarathustra.* We can now suggest that the Second Essay, " 'Guilt,' 'Bad Conscience,' and the Like," is an interpretation of the saying of Anaximander. Just as in Heidegger's essay, there is a sequential treatment of the significant words or concepts of the saying, and an attempt to trace the way in which the tradition inscribes its translations of these words and of the saying itself. In the course of his analysis Nietzsche, too, proposes a number of translations or equivalences—for example that between *Schuld* (guilt) and *Schulden* (debts). A similar relation obtains between the English "owe" and "ought." The principle here, Nietzsche says, is "the idea that every injury has its *equivalent* and can actually be paid back, even if only through the pain of the culprit" (GM II:4). And he gives this observation an Oedipal, genealogical, and tragic twist by noting that this is the way that "parents still punish their children." Not far below the surface of Nietzsche's analysis is the contextualization of these debtor-creditor relations in terms of social structures such as those of the commercial Milesian world in which Anaximander flourished.

At this point it would be possible to note Nietzsche's translation and analysis of a number of key terms in the Anaximander saying that he takes to characterize "thinking *as such.*" Without repeating that analysis here, we can take note of the fact that philosophy does often, if implicitly, confess its own indebtedness. Plato's *Republic* opens with the warning that telling the truth and paying one's debts may not be an adequate account of justice. At its philosophical center stands the story of the cave, the sun, and the divided line—a story, Socrates says, which stands in place of a completely adequate presentation of the truth. It is simply the best he can do in the circumstances. To quote the dialogue:

> "It's a debt I wish I could pay you in full, instead of only paying interest [*tokos,* which can also mean 'child,' hence the frequent translation 'child of the

> Good'] on the loan," I replied. "But for the present you must accept my description of the child of the Good as interest. But take care I don't inadvertently cheat you by paying in bad money."[23]

Is the debt ever paid? Or is it internalized and made infinite? This is the question that Nietzsche poses for the philosophical tradition.

Should we say, with Heidegger, that Nietzsche does not enter into a "thoughtful dialogue" with early Greek thinking because he takes over the metaphysical sense of being that has dominated our tradition? For Heidegger the key is how we are to think and translate the *ta onta,* the "beings" of which Anaximander's saying speaks. Although he admits that it will sound exaggerated to say it, Heidegger says it anyway: "The fate of the West hangs on the translation of the word *eon,* assuming that the translation consists in *crossing over* to the truth of what comes to language in *eon.*"[24]

Nietzsche agrees, in a way. His genealogical or archaeological project of unearthing the sense of "thinking *as such*" and of "man" is directed precisely at overcoming a careless and hasty assimilation of the customary sense of man and thinking. Yet Heidegger, at the beginning of his discussion of the *onta* of which the fragment speaks, again finds it necessary to distinguish himself from Nietzsche, and to demonstrate that Nietzsche is still enclosed within metaphysics. After stressing the importance of *onta* and its translation, Heidegger abruptly introduces Nietzsche again without any obvious preparation:

> At the summit of the completion [*Gipfel der Vollendung*] of Western philosophy these words are pronounced: "To *stamp* Becoming with the character of Being—that is the *highest will to power.*" Thus writes Nietzsche in a note entitled "Recapitulation."[25]

We might note that Heidegger takes Nietzsche's fragment (a posthumous note) to be a significant utterance, while he treats the Anaximander *Spruch* as in need of severe editing. In any event, he says here that Nietzsche and Anaximander would *seem* to be saying the Same (*das Gleiche*) even if what they say is not "identical." And this conjunction of the Same and the nonidentical would seem to be "the fundamental condition of a thoughtful dialogue between recent and early times."[26]

This is the point at which Heidegger wants to distance himself from Nietzsche's and the tradition's merely correct translation of *onta.* Should we see in this gesture an assertion of his own freedom from indebtedness? Heidegger does not consider the possibility that Nietzsche might also be challenging the "correct" translation by using the language of being and becoming against itself. In fragments like this one, or in the much more subtle and complex published texts dealing with the eternal recurrence, Nietzsche can be read as deforming the metaphysical language of being

and becoming, and time and eternity, precisely in order to establish an altered relation to the "teachings of madness" or to what has hitherto constituted "thinking *as such.*"

The question is whether the sort of thinking embodied in Anaximander's saying is inside or outside the metaphysical tradition. In his efforts to place it outside, Heidegger is forced to eliminate or retranslate a whole set of terms—*chreon, tisis, dike, taxis*—that have to do with what we may generally call the economic: the world of valuing and evaluation. For Nietzsche the position represented by Anaximander is the earliest form of civilization to which we have access, and is at least as old as the concept of "legal subjects" (*Rechtspersonen*) (GM II:4). Eventually, of course, we will have to ask whether there is anything more archaic than this "prehistory." We could see the claim about "thinking *as such*" as an extension of Nietzsche-Zarathustra's view of what madness preaches. As in the latter account, there is a distinction to be made between an unreflective thinking in terms of guilt, punishment, debt, and credit and the appearance of specific ideals and doctrines based on that thinking.

According to the narrative given in the *Genealogy,* the latter result from a cataclysmic event brought on by the needs of organized social life, and the self-inflicted transformations that warriors unwittingly incur when they bind themselves to a world of law. This is a crisis of internalization, in which guilt, debt, and punishment are no longer inscribed merely on the bodies of men and women, but in their consciousness. Restricted to their consciousness, the instincts of aggression turn inward and generate an internal economy of debt and credit. Part of such an internal economy is the development of explicit religious and philosophical teachings—that is, the internal inscription of what madness preaches from Anaximander to Schopenhauer. The internalization of guilt and debt is followed by its infinitization when the community comes to seem all powerful and is metaphorically represented by an infinite and omnipotent god.

What requires emphasis is that Nietzsche sees *both* external and internal inscriptions as variants of "thinking *as such.*" Such thinking coincides with man's self-definition as the evaluating or esteeming animal. So far Nietzsche is in agreement with Heidegger that there is a profound correspondence among the earliest conceptions of being, thinking, and man. As Heidegger puts it: "What is Greek is the dawn of that destiny in which Being illuminates itself in beings and so propounds a certain essence of man: that essence unfolds historically as something fateful, preserved in Being and dispensed by Being, without ever being separated from Being."[27] Nietzsche too thinks that the essence or concept of man is hardly accidental or adventitious, as he suggests in this genealogical sketch of the appearance of "man":

> The feeling of guilt, of personal obligation, had its origin, as we saw, in the oldest and most primitive personal relationship (*Personen-Verhältnis*), that between buyer and seller, creditor and debtor: it was here that one person first *measured himself* against another . . . ; here it was that the oldest kind of astuteness developed; here, likewise, we may suppose, did human pride, the feeling of superiority in relation to other animals, have its first beginnings. Perhaps our word "man" (*manas*) still expresses something of this feeling of self satisfaction: man designated himself as the creature that measures values, evaluates and measures, as the "valuating animal as such." (GM II:8)

We know what Heidegger would say about Nietzsche's identification of man as the valuer or esteemer. He would see Nietzsche as simply projecting back into the origins of thought the value thinking that is typical of the metaphysical era in its completion, but that is also the destined culmination of that era, already implicit in the metaphysics of presence. It is just such projection, he would maintain, that prevents Nietzsche from entering into thoughtful conversation with the early Greeks. And he would add that it is just this adoption of valuational thinking as the norm that also prevents Nietzsche from thinking beyond the tradition, and in fact locks him into it.

But is it so clear that Nietzsche has trapped himself in that way? Consider for a moment the role that *man* plays here. The identification of man as the esteemer is one that had already been made in *Zarathustra* in the chapter "On the Thousand and One Goals," where it is said:

> Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil. Verily, they did not take it, they did not find it, nor did it come to them as a voice from heaven. Only man placed values (*Werthe*) in things to preserve himself—he alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning. Therefore he calls himself "man," which means: the esteemer (*Schätzende*). (Z I:15)

This would be the supreme instance of what Nietzsche early in the *Genealogy* calls "the lordly right of giving names" (GM I:2). For here men name themselves precisely as those who give such names in so far as they esteem and create (*Schätzen ist Schaffen*). The attempt to bolster this interpretation of man by reference to the Sanskrit *manas* seems no better or worse by conventional philological criteria than other such etymologies in Nietzsche and Heidegger. Esteeming and disdaining are listed in Sanskrit dictionaries as among the senses or cognates of *manas* but not as the word's primary sense. But to say that Nietzsche sees no other possibility than valuative thinking, and sees man as nothing but the evaluator, would be to ignore the very important point that man is a *limited* concept for Nietzsche. One might say, following Foucault, that he is the first thinker to attempt to expose and explore the limits of the concept man, and that the texts just cited are contributions to discerning those limits. "Man" Zarathustra announces in his very first speeches "is something that must be overcome."

And if, as Nietzsche suggests, we are to translate man as "the evaluator," how then ought we to understand and translate "*Übermensch*"? As "meta-evaluator," as "man beyond evaluation," as "post-man" or as "post-evaluator"?

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche had spoken of the truth as that which lies beyond measuring when he said of the Dionysian (but not only of the Dionysian) that "excess (*Übermass*) reveals itself as truth."[28] The *Übermensch* is the excessive one who goes beyond the measure, which means that he goes beyond man as the measure or as the measurer. This way of understanding the *Übermensch* may, incidentally, help to distinguish Nietzschean thinking from the sophistic or Protagorean relativism with which it is often all too hastily associated. To the extent that man is not ultimate, the force of "man is the measure of all things" is drastically undercut.

Like Heidegger, then, Nietzsche interprets the Anaximander fragment and its heritage in order to establish a site beyond the economy and constraint of the metaphysical tradition. He is not bound to valuational thinking in the way that Heidegger suggests; but he is engaged in a project of tracing the limits of that thinking. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger says that Nietzsche's commitment to valuative thinking is a sign of his acceptance of the metaphysics of presence:

> At *bottom* this being [of values] meant neither more nor less than the presence of something already there, though not in so vulgar and handy a sense as tables and chairs [the "furniture of the earth" of that form of the metaphysics of presence which is Anglo-American empiricism]. . . . How stubbornly the idea of values ingrained itself in the nineteenth century can be seen from the fact that even Nietzsche, and precisely he, never departed from this perspective. . . . His entanglement in the thicket of the idea of values, his failure to understand its questionable origin, is the reason why Nietzsche did not attain to the true center of philosophy.[29]

Now in the *Genealogy* Nietzsche does think this questionable origin. It could be said that Heidegger and Nietzsche both attack the metaphysics of presence by circumscribing the limits of valuative thinking and offering an alternative to it. Heidegger's critique and alternative are economic, consisting in a vertical perspective according to which the *es gibt* ("it gives/it is") takes precedence over the circulation of values. Heidegger inscribes appropriation within *Ereignis*. Nietzsche's alternative is a horizontal one that juxtaposes to the economy of debt and credit one of excess, circulation and gift giving. It is this economy of the gift that is invoked in Zarathustra's first address to the sun—"You great star, what would your happiness be had you not those for whom you shine" (Z I:P)—and which is formulated in his (first) farewell address to his disciples "On the Gift-Giving Virtue" (Z I:22).

By reading the structures of gift giving in *Zarathustra* against the analysis of "thinking as such" in the *Genealogy*, it is possible to see the outlines of an economy of excess that would contrast strongly with that of debt and credit. This would bear some remarkable affinities to the economy of the gift and the potlatch as they have been articulated by Marcel Mauss and then rediscovered in Nietzsche by Georges Bataille.[30] In such an economy presents (as opposed to values) are precisely what is not present. They circulate, so that they are not property (and therefore perhaps not substances) in our metaphysical terms. They may be squandered or destroyed in the potlatch (as in the festival or banquet in the last part of *Zarathustra*) rather than preserved as investments.

Read against such an economy of the gift, Heidegger's "*es gibt*" appears both thin and transcendental. Moreover, Heidegger seems blind to the gift giving theme in Nietzsche's texts. For example, in the long analysis that he devotes to a passage from *The Will to Power*, which he takes to be Nietzsche's emblematic statement concerning the question of nihilism, Heidegger totally omits any consideration of the beginning of this notebook entry, in which Nietzsche presents nihilism as "the recognition of the long squandering (*Vergeudung*) of strength, the agony of the 'in vain,' the insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recuperate and regain tranquility" (WP 12). Nihilism can see squandering only as a defect, a marginal corruption of the metaphysical economy of debt; while Zarathustra, we remember, describes himself as a squanderer, and in the beatitudes that he speaks in the marketplace (that is, in the heart of the metaphysical economy of exchange) he says, "I love those who squander themselves" (Z I:P:4).

Just as we may need to think of the *Übermensch* as the post-evaluator, we may need to give some more thought to Nietzsche's talk of an "*Umwertung aller Werthe*," which we have been accustomed to translate as a "transvaluation of all values." Is it simply a question of reversing or inverting the values that attach to various items and concepts? Or is it more a matter of using the language of valuation against itself, in order to suggest the possibility of economies that may not be completely recuperable within the thinking we have practiced for so long, and which so far has had a claim (although only a claim) to be considered as "thinking *as such*"?

NOTES

1. Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. Frank Capuzzi and David Farrell Krell (New York, 1985), p. 16; hereafter cited as EGT.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago, 1962), p. 45; *Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 1, p. 818. The former hereafter cited as PTG, the latter as KSA.

3. EGT, p. 14.

4. EGT, p. 23.
5. EGT, p. 57.
6. Charles H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 185.
7. PTG, p. 60.
8. PTG, p. 45.
9. PTG, pp. 45–46.
10. PTG, p. 46.
11. PTG, pp. 48–49.
12. That is, section 20 of the Second Part. Quotations from "On Redemption" are taken from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1966), pp. 137–142; KSA, vol. 4, pp. 177–182.
13. EGT, pp. 39, 41.
14. EGT, pp. 41–42.
15. EGT, p. 28.
16. EGT, p. 45.
17. EGT, p. 43.
18. Homer, *Iliad* 22.19.
19. Homer, *Odyssey,* 2.76.
20. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology,* p. 180.
21. GM refers to Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967).
22. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice,* trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 139–164.
23. Plato, *Republic* 507a, trans. H. D. P. Lee (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967).
24. EGT, p. 33.
25. EGT, p. 22.
26. EGT, p. 23.
27. EGT, p. 25.
28. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 46.
29. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 166–167.
30. See my book *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise and Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), especially the "Prelude" and "On Presence and Presents: The Gift in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.*"